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Brewhouse Lane

Danger of college's falling turrets – 1934

THE renovations to St John's College have been the subject of much comment in *The Times*.

It was suggested that the two turrets at the front were in imminent danger of falling away from the main tower because of a system of main drainage 30 years ago when a trench 30 feet deep was dug along the street.

But there is no evidence of settlement due to foundation trouble. The walls had shattered because of vibrations caused by street traffic.

New Victoria cinema ready to open – 1938

THE new Victoria Cinema on Market Hill, Cambridge, opens today.

The auditorium is an example of complete harmony between the architect and the decorative painter.

No architectural enrichment is applied to the walls, which remain, for the most part, in darkness, but when the space is filled with light, a gorgeous flow of rich colours rises like waves from the back of the house to reach a climax in the rich proscenium curtain of crimson and gold.

Auctioneer pelted with eggs – 1924

HADDENHAM was full of excitement when a crowd of about 250 residents turned out and resented the appearance of an auctioneer who had come to conduct a sale under duress for Ouse Drainage Board rates.

The auctioneer made preparations to commence the sale.

Then, things began to get lively, and ancient eggs made their appearance and, amid roars of laughter, the auctioneer stood like a hero spattered with yolks of many hues. They came from all directions and showered all over him.

Through all, the auctioneer tried to carry on.

There was a plentiful supply of "ammunition" and many of the eggs made their mark on people who did not expect them.

Ice-man cometh – 1908

GREAT blocks of glittering, iridescent ice are manufactured on the site of the Falcon Inn, Petty Cury, every hot midsummer morning.

Mr J.V. Pryor, the fish-monger, has installed a plant for this modern miracle and the shrill insistent note of the dynamo is joined by the plunk-plunk of the gas engine exhaust.

Like the flying machine, the ice factory is at present only in its infancy and the plant is expensive but the method of manufacture is simplicity itself, taking 50 hours to produce slabs weighing two cwt apiece and makes more than Mr Pryor needs for his ordinary fish business.

Fourpence a chaffinch – 1907

AN RSPCA inspector saw a box of wild birds in the booking office at Isleham railway station addressed to a man in Islington.

He found it contained a number of goldfinches together with some linnets, their wings fluttered through the side of the box.

A birdcatcher of The Pits, Isleham, claimed they were chaffinches.

A linnet or chaffinch was worth fourpence while a goldfinch, newly caught, was worth about a shilling.

Goldfinches had been sold for up to 30 shillings, but that was only after they'd been taught.

Foul smells in Brewhouse Lane – 1897

HOW many of the inhabitants of "aristocratic" Cambridge have penetrated the depths of Barnwell through the lovely labyrinths of Brewhouse Lane?

A mere outsider might suppose that the city of colleges had no dark parts; that its workmen's tenements were models of sanitation and comfort; that its streets were well paved and lit; and that no foul smells arose from its sewers – in short, that a learned city would be raised and modelled on enlightened lines.

For the dwellers in the 'town' proper, there is a reading room and library.

In Mill Road, there is another reading room and library amongst those who are, at least, moderately well to do; but in Barnwell, the abode of the toiler there is now nothing but hard work, smaller houses, surroundings much more unwholesome than in the other parts of the town – and his reading room has been taken away.

Can it be that those in authority are carrying out the scriptural prophecy: "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even which he hath"?

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Ever-present market man leaves with fond memories – 1943

J. Hopkins retired after nearly 60 years atCambridge Market

MR J. Hopkins, of Stretham, retires from Cambridge market after having never missed a single Saturday in the last 40 years.

It was nearly 60 years ago when he first made the journey with his parents and he is the last of a long line of traders who regularly brought their poultry, eggs and butter from the Isle of Ely to be disposed of in Cambridge Market.

Mr. Hopkins told of some of the changes he has seen.

"The market, as I first knew it, was quite different from what it is today.

"On the north aide were two rows of stalls which sold poultry, eggs and butter, and, on the east side, were two double rows of stalls all selling English meat.

"All produce was plentiful – but money scarce – and it was seldom that a clearance was made before nightfall.

"Eggs were 16 a shilling then, and butter was sold by the yard, at prices ranging from 1/- to 1/3d. This was before the last war.

"It was the custom at that time for the keeper of the public scales, to visit those stalls which sold yard butter, weighing a pound at each, with scales which were made especially to weigh a yard of butter cut in halves

"It was possible to get a hot lunch in Cambridge market in those times. In the centre, there was one large dining booth with tables and forms for about six or eight. Anyone could sit down to a hot lunch which was invariably roast leg of pork with Yorkshire pudding and vegetables."

Mr. Hopkins has vivid memories of the state of the roads in those early days. They were maintained by the parish councils through whose district they passed, and were often very bad.

With the coming of county councils, there was a great improvement but, for horse-drawn vehicles, the application of tar to the surface made winter journeys a nightmare.

In Mr. Hopkins' youth, he tells us, the business life of Cambridge was not quite beyond reproach. Much credit was given, and many bad debts incurred. Treating and tipping were resorted to to obtain custom. Many stallholders went home far from being sober.

"But today, it is all very different, and I consider that the integrity of both public and traders has reached a very high standard."

About himself, Mr. Hopkins explained that, in his youth, he was keen on outdoor games and "had a go at almost everything". Now, in his retirement, he does not intend to "rest" for he has enough gardening to keep him from being idle.

He claims some success as horticulturist, and he has won many prizes at our local shows – before the claims of business became too pressing.

In 1929 to 1931, Mr. Hopkins won outright the cup presented by the Stretham Horticultural Society to the most successful competitor.

His interests stretch beyond his garden, for he takes a lively interest in public affairs, and for many years has been a member of the Stretham parish council. He is also a life trustee of the Stretham charities.

"And so", says Mr. Hopkins, "I say farewell to all my Cambridge friends with many thanks to all."